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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 131021878-4158-02]

RIN 0648-XD744

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian district and the Bering Sea subarea (BSEAI) of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island management area (BSAI) by vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery. This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2015 Atka mackerel total allowable catch (TAC) in the BSEAI allocated to vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 27, 2015, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June 10, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by

the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The A season allowance of the 2015 Atka mackerel TAC, in the BSEAI, allocated to vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery was established as a directed fishing allowance of 1,150 metric tons by the final 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (79 FR 12108, March 4, 2014), and as adjusted by an inseason adjustment (80 FR 188, January 5, 2015).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the BSEAI by vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery.

After the effective dates of this closure, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, (AA) finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such a requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the directed fishing closure of

the Atka mackerel fishery in the BSEAI for vessels participating in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of January 26, 2015. The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: January 27, 2015.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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